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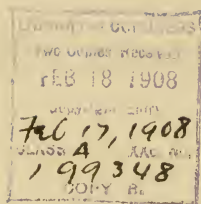
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CAIN

AND OTHER POEMS

BY
JAMES U. SNYDER.

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Copyright, 1908,
by
JAMES U. SNYDER.

TO MY MOTHER, WHOSE LOVE
HAS MEANT LIFE TO ME SINCE
CHILDHOOD; AND TO MY FATHER
WHOSE SYMPATHY HAS MEANT
STRENGTH, THIS LITTLE TRIB-
UTE OF AFFECTION IS TENDER-
LY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

This little book is thrust upon the public, without excuse or apology. Some of its contents have already found their way into print and have elicited words of praise from indulgent friends of the author, who have been kind enough to express their approval; but whether such approval sprang from common courtesy or deep sincerity, I know not. However, I trust that the cordial reception given the individual poems will not now be withheld from this collection.

I cannot but feel that whatever has thrilled me, may, perhaps, thrill others. If I have caught a single bar of radiance from the great firmament of song, and flashed it upon a single soul that had not seen it before, my efforts have not been in vain. One heart-string made to vibrate with a new thrill, one life made to see a brighter hope, or one soul made to hear the voice crying from the heights, is better than an eternity of praise.

These songs are sung in "varying keys". Some may touch the chord of joyousness and hope; others may be fraught with the wail of the minor,—but what soul is there without its minor? My sincerest hope is that some human "harp of heart" may be constrained to tremble into sympathetic harmony with my own, and thus transmit the melody, eliminating whatever discords may exist, until it swells into perfect song in the heart of the reader. Trusting that something may be found that is worthy and nothing that is disappointing, I commend these simple poems to your kind indulgence and sympathetic consideration.

JAMES U. SNYDER.

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CAIN.

I.

A THOUSAND iridescent hues broke through
The East's half-open door and kissed the face
Of new-born Earth until it smiled. They burst
Into a thousand spangled bars that crept
And filtered through the leaves, all golden-meshed,
Flecking the sward with alternating light
And shadow; danced upon the brook and threw
Defiantly a proud reflection back
That met the parent glow mid air. They touched
A thousand bird-throats into living song,
And woke the unwieldy things that crawl and creep, —
All jubilant and happy in the light
Of God's own manifest benignity, —
For now it seemed, the utter pain and woe
Of that first fall had vanished from the earth,
And wrath divine had been forgotten till
Man stood erect and reconciled to God.
The songs of late-lost Eden swelled again
And somewhat stilled regret of banishment.
No bitterness remained for judgment passed
Against original sin and broken faith;
Since every shrub was as a burning bush
Proclaiming to the world the will of God.

II.

The sons of Adam rose and faced the East,
And drank its gorgeous splendor, till at last
The god within them was awake and cried;
"The Lord is great and greatly to be praised!"
Thence each one to his wonted task repaired,
Cain, to his fields, now rich in harvest's prime,
And Abel to the tending of his flocks.

III.

The morning passed, and Cain was out alone
Gathering the first-fruits, finest of the land,
As offerings to the God who blessed his toil.
"Surely," he said, "this sheaf with golden ears.
These melons sweetened by the breath of heaven,
This fruit so delicate in green and gold
Will not be spurned by Him who gave them growth."
So he, with all his treasure-trove heaped high
Upon the sacrificial altar, bared
His head, with face made radiant by the glow
Of fond anticipation, prayed that he
And his might be acceptable to God.

IV.

But strange it seems to mortals weak and blind,
The gift was spurned, the giver turned away!
Eden itself was lost with better grace,
Than when poor Cain, rejected and unblest,
Stood disappointed by his sacrifice.
All labor seemed in vain. If not the first
Fruit of the land, and guerdon of his toil
Be worthy signs of service, why what more?
How inscrutable are thy ways, O Lord,
To those who only know thee from afar!
How plain thy purposes, in life and death,
When weaklings lay their trembling hearts to thine,
And see their duty through the eyes of God!

V.

And Abel also, with his heart attuned
To vibrate with the Infinite, brought forth
The firstlings of his flock, and fat thereof.
His altar builded high of unhewn stones,
A token of divine fidelity,
Breathed holy incense and the fat of rams.
The smoke ascending pleased the eye of Him
Who all-beholding sees not acts alone,
But e'en the inmost motives whence they spring.
In ways unknown, but unmistakable,
Divine approval settled on the head
Of Abel; and his face with holy zeal
Shone with a halo, dazzling as the sun.

VI.

The ceremonies ending, there they stood;
The one triumphant in the consciousness
Of sacrifice acceptable, His mien
Bespoke the glory of a deed well done.
The other, disappointed, woe-begone,
Stood as a living monument of one
Who did his best, and yet somehow, had failed.
Here in Creation's dawn, when men were tried
In many a burning crucible, and weighed
In balances uncertain, grew the truth
That ruled for ages without utterance:
"Two men shall be at labor in the field,
The one be taken, and the other left."

VII.

Cain was wroth. Hatred rankled in his heart
And ruled his actions. Every good intent
That prompted him to sacrifice, was quenched,
And all his being shook with murderous rage.
He met with Abel in the field alone,
Who greeted him with brotherly esteem:
"Peace be to thee, my brother, peace to thee."
And as a gentle zephyr feeds the flame,
So Abel's words of kindness fed Cain's wrath.
And there beneath a perfect eastern sky,
When all the universe seemed lost in peace,
A living clod, with God's own image stamped,
And as an image only—horrid scene—
Stood with his brother's blood upon his hands!

VIII.

Somewhere from out the regions of the air
But yet so near and palpable it seemed,
That Cain was startled at the very sound,
A voice spake, stern, but sweet and tender still:
"Where is thy brother?" All the memories
Of sweet companionship with him who lay
Unburied, bleeding on the parching sands,
Possessed his brain, now conscious of its guilt,
And touched his voice and made it tremulous.
Yet nerved by that same power behind the deed,
He answered, unconcerned as he might:
"I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?"

IX.

O Cain! Thou didst propound a query there,
That seemed absurd and foolish when 'twas said,
For only one thou hadst, besides thyself
To be the guardian of. How easy then
For comradeship and love to rule you both!
Still that old question comes with doubled force
Down through the ages; and in every soul
The answer must abide, the eternal yea.
And with the roll of aeons how increased
Are its severe demands of fulfillment!
For where thou hadst but one in love to keep
We Cains today must keep our multitudes!

X.

Again the Silence spoke: "Thy brother's blood
Calleth to thee from out the ground, O Cain!
No longer shall the earth yield her increase
To recompense thy toil; and thou shalt be
A wanderer and a vagabond, henceforth."
And thus for sin, his Eden lost again,
He set his face towards the outer world,
And bore with him a double mark of guilt.
The one upon his conscience so that he
Might ne'er forget his sin of jealousy;
The other stamped by God upon his face
To brand him as a murderer, so that men
Might look upon his countenance and say:
"Behold the mark of God, so harm him not."

XI.

And as he wandered o'er the trackless wilds
Unknown, unloved, an exile weak and worn,
His guilty voice bewailed his utmost woe:
"O woe is me! I cannot bear my grief,
For men shall hound me with the taunt of guilt,
Jibing the while, 'Cain, where is thy brother?'
If God had said to me, 'Thou shalt not kill,'
Ah then would I have known the sin of it
And staid my hand; but in that awful hour
No voice was heard, not even the inward voice
That since has cried aloud and haunts me still.
Yet henceforth, I shall live in awe of Him
Who drove me hence in mercy. O, I know
That my deserts demanded blood for blood.
With pangs of Adam's sin within me born,
I can't forget the deed that brought me here;
But I shall put the past beneath my feet,
And turn my sin-marked face unto the Lord."

XII.

And as the thought, half uttered, died away
An echo from the spirit seemed to say:
"Lo, in thy lack of strength, thou hast mine own
To guide thy faltering feet o'er ways unknown,
Till thou shalt find the destined land of Nod
The altar-stair that leads thee up to God!"

A FLUTE DREAM.

I.

TALM in the ember-glow,
When a day of care is done,
When the howling night-winds blow
And scatter the flakes of the driven snow,
Faintly the flute-notes, one by one,
Chase each other along the scale;
Singing at first of loves that last,
Then from the keys they scamper and leap,
And startle the player, half asleep,
—He remembers, and vainly tries to weep, —
For the notes break into a sad, sad wail,
Of the hopes that lived and died in the past.

II.

Light as a fairy's feet,
Unbidden a dream intrudes,
A man's ideal pure and sweet,
A vision of happiness, all complete,
Shines through the barren solitudes,
And the lapse of years seems but a span,
Since guileless youth and true-love's art
Made life seem one great holiday,
And scattered garlands in his way,
For over his heart love held full sway.
A man is never the more a man,
Than when Love sits victor over his heart.

III.

Shimmering shadows play
Like ghosts in the haunted gloom,
While the music fades away,
And echoes a sigh or a love-lorn lay.
Then through the glimmer of his room,
He sees a face in a gilded frame,
Faded somewhat, but passing fair,
Fixing upon him her soft blue eyes.
Lost in dream as the firelight dies,
Deep in his soul a still voice cries,
So breathing softly he speaks her name,
And breaks the spell of his heart's despair.

IV.

Back to the flute keys then
Flew his fingers swift and strong,
And the notes swelled forth again,
Breaking the calm like a grand "Amen."
Sweetly they sang love's own sweet song,
The triumph of love, a conquest of heart.
Then the gloom of his soul was lit with a gleam
That came from the shores of the Long Ago.
It brought back joys he used to know,
That blent with the music soft and low.
"Love," cried the notes, "eternal thou art,
A man is a man, though he fondly dream."

V.

Faint in the dying night,
As the notes leaped past control,
A figure in radiant white
Stood in the uncertain light,
And motionless there, peered into his soul.
"Ah thou art with me," the wild notes cried,
As they swept the scale in varying keys.
Then the vision faded as it came,
Leaving the gloom of the room the same,
But as it vanished she spoke his name.
And the last faint trill of the flute notes died.
"A dream," he said, "but my heart's at ease."

ONE WORD.

MY love and I were strolling by
A field of ripened grain.
She plucked an ear and stripped it bare,
And digged the earth with tender care,
And sowed the seed again.

Another day we passed that way
When winter's snows were done;
And lo, the spot, almost forgot,
Where seed were sown and heeded not,
Glowed with verdure in the sun!

My love and I were passing by
Some children at their play.
They fussed and fought, nor little thought,
The mischief they conceived and wrought.
—She spoke a word and went her way.—

She spoke a word, one simple word,
But oh what meaning it contained!
The kindness wrought, although unsought,
Sprang into beauty in their thought,
We journeyed on, the word remained.

Another day we passed that way,
And lo, what wonder met our eyes!
The children then had grown to men
And they were sowing seed again,
Seed not of earth, but paradise!

THY STAR.

IS there a star you fix your hope upon
And watch intently till thy visage change
Itself into a perfect counterpart
Of its siderial lustre? Lo, the change
Is not a wonder; and some baser soul
May gaze at thee as thou dost at the star,
And silent as the passing of the years,
His hopes shall be thine own, and all he knows
Is laid on high Ambition's altar fire.
The incense rises to thine Unknown Strength,
And through the purple smoke he sees afar
The glory of thy face and of thy star!

Thus through the ages a divinity
Has been abroad upon the earth, and steals
Into the heart and life of him who toils
And bends his powers to climb above the graves
Of those who closed their eyes to things sublime
Or sought an easy path to fields of peace.
Shall he who spurned the sledge's artful power
To crumble every stumbling stone to dust,
Ascend the Horeb of Chivalrous deeds?
Who falters at the mole-hill in the sand,
If he look toward the snow-line on the mount,
Will miss the trifles lying at his feet,
For great it is to strive, but greater still
It is to overcome, for that is glory.

Is there a shape within thy secret heart,
Whose image follows thee in all thy ways?
Adore it then, for man is just as great
As his ideal. The years shall make thy face
To radiate the light of thine adored.
High-seated reigns the god of our ideals,
Whose feet we soar and touch unless we fall
O'er our own earth-bound clay-banks in the way.

HAS ANY NOBLE DEED BEEN WROUGHT?

HAS any noble deed been wrought
This day, or kind word spoken
That blossomed into noble thought
Where hope had fled and faith was broken?

The day is done, but not its deeds.
Our hopes, our joys, our sorrows,
Are sown like seeds among the weeds,
And bear their fruitage on the morrow.

What of the harvest, O my soul?
The fondest hopes we cherish
May prosper as the seasons roll,
And then may sink in shame and perish!

O head thou must not doubt the heart!
For every kindness given
May lose on earth its better part,
But shall be made complete in heaven.

The silent Judge who sits enthroned
In majesty supernal,
Has for our petty faults atoned,
And made the good we do, eternal.

May this last thought fore'er abide,
The same sweet, sacred story!
For God has drawn the veil aside,
And I have seen Him in his glory.

STRENGTH OUT OF WEAKNESS.

WHEN I was young, my heart was old,
And shadows aye prevailed.
The world I saw was dull and cold,
I did not sing but wailed:

“Among the clamoring crowd I stand
A wanderer weak and worn.
The loveliest idol’s feigning hand
My locks of power has shown.

“I, in my weakness, cry aloud,
Yea, to strong men I cry;
But they, in mingling with the crowd,
Become as weak as I.

“A common weakness then, said I,
Must this whole crowd infest;
And is there none who do not cry,
And none supremely blest?”

Just then I heard a troubled shriek,
A faint and heart-sick sigh,—
“O brother, help a brother weak,
Thou art more strong than I!”

A trembling hand I reached to aid
The weakling of the throng.
The clamor that the crowd had made
Was changed into a song.
For there the weak gave mutual aid,
And thus we all grew strong!

SECLUSION.

A WAY from the heat of the city street,
And the sound of hoof and wheel!
With a roof of trees and gentle breeze,
There let me live the thoughts I feel.

In a lone alcove of sweet-scented grove,
With shadows deeply cast;
There is room to think and fondly drink
Deeply the cup of a dear, dead past.

There from the throne of the great Unknown
Come whispers through the sod.
'Neath straggling vine and eglantine,
I breathe in the breath of God!

WHEN THE WILD CRAB APPLES BLOW.

I.

① THE rarest and the fairest of the balmy youth-
ful days,

As in the twilight fondly straying 'mid the
pleasantest of ways,

With a coy and modest maiden, the evening hours fly by,
Like a cloud before the zephyrs blow across the evening
sky.

I say the sweetest and the fleetest time that youthful
heart can know,

Is when the blush is on the maiden and the wild crab
apples blow.

II.

When we stroll among the budding flowers, and breathe
their sweet perfume,

Our childish hopes like blossoms grow, and bursting
into bloom,

Scatter the sweetest fragrance o'er the dear departed
years,

And twine around our memories a wreath of smiles and
tears.

The pendulum that measures youth swings swiftly to
and fro,

When the blush is on the maiden and the wild crab
apples blow.

III.

I fain would have the beauties live, that filled our souls
when young,
And through the varied scenes a-gone, so lovingly have
clung
Around her tender heart and mine, like bands of beaten
gold,
When everything in nature round, except our love,
grew old.
Again I long for days of joy, like those I used to know,
For the blush is on the maiden and the wild crab apples
blow.

SONG OF AUTUMN.

SPRING weaves a carpet glossy green, as soft as
eider down.

On every hillock far and near, she lays a
flowery crown.

She cheers the heart and cools the brow with a per-
fume-laden breeze,

And puts new songs in the birdies' throats in all the
forest trees.

But the days are far more cheery and the richest joys
begin,

When the frost has nipped the blossoms and the corn is
gathered in.

Summer sees the ripened wheatfields like a vanquished
army fall,

Hears the nestlings chirp and twitter; hears the Bob
White's lusty call;

Hears the lazy hum and mumble of the lazy bugs and
bees;

Sees the brown grass-hopper leap in dusty roads and
close-cut leas.

In the choking heat of summer how we long for air
that's thin!

When the frost has nipped the blossoms and the corn is
gathered in.

The king of all the seasons four thus claims our loudest
praise,
For he fulfills the promises of Spring's most glowing
days.
He makes the Summer's fruitage sweet, he sees it in
the store.
With many a gladsome whoop and shout, with many a
wild uproar;
And we hear the glad Thanksgiving song ring out
above the din,
When the frost has nipped the blossoms and the corn is
gathered in.

WAVING GOLDENROD.

I.

WHEN the maple leaves are crimson,
And the ground is covered o'er
With a vari-colored carpet,
Like an oriental floor;
And the smoky haze of Autumn
Hangs about the distant hills;
And the lonesome murmurs echo
Mournfully from all the rills;
Then in every field and valley,
A thousand gay plumes nod,
And glitter in the pale sunlight,
The waving goldenrod.

II.

All the flowers that Summer cherished,
Long ago have passed away;
And their beauty and their perfume,
Like a dream of yesterday
Faintly linger on in sadness
In our clouded memory.
No flower wastes its vestal sweetness
Howe'er unseen it be.
But the gloomy days are brighter
When the last son of the sod
Rears his head on every summit,—
Waving goldenrod.

III.

Autumn breezes, silent hoarfrost,
Shatter down a million leaves.
Soon the spears of crystal clearness
Will be hanging from the eaves.
Now the fruitage and the harvest
In the swelling garners lie;
And the fields are sad and lonesome,
And the valleys dead and dry;
But the angel of the blossoms
Sweeping o'er the hills of God,
Left the glowing, monumental,
Waving goldenrod.

IV.

How like the last bright prospect
Of a life that's nearly spent,
Waves this sentinel of winter
By its breezes idly bent!
Beckon on, thou last of brilliants,
Wave thy banner to and fro!
When the shortening day grows darker,
Let thy beauty grow and grow.
Like a great thought lead us onward
In the path that must be trod.
We shall see thy glow in Heaven,
Waving goldenrod.

TOKEN OF FIRST LOVE.

1.

AFTER a day of toil and care
When strength and spirit sink,
O give me a place in the old arm chair!
There let me sit and think.

II.

Think of the days that used to be
When love and hope ran high;
And the blue of the sky and the blue of the sea
Met in the hue of her eye.

III.

How in the prime of childhood's time,
Over the fields we strayed;—
O they ravish my heart those songs sublime,
She sang as we dreamed and played.

IV.

Wild flowers we plucked as hand in hand,
We strolled along the brink
Of that cool stream in the border land
'Twixt Dream and Truth, I think.

V.

We whiled away the twilight hour
In meadow, field or heather.
And sometimes each would pick a flower
And twine their stems together.

VI.

We'd pitch them high into the air
To see if they would sever.
If not, the prophecy was fair,
And we would love forever.

VII.

A childish heart that asks a sign
To prove if love be true:
Yet through the years I see them twine,—
Those simple violets blue.

VIII.

O I have faith in honest flowers
And love the azure hue
That lends its grace to lonely hours,
But hearts are not so true!

IX.

And yet, somehow, somewhere I trust
That hearts and flowers anew
Shall bloom again from out the dust,
And I shall find her true.

TO A ROSEBUD.

SWEET tiny rosebud, plucked from her bosom,
You bring me fragrance that she loved so well!
O pretty rosebud, queen of the garden,
Come gentle spirit, her heart throbbings tell!

In the soft moonlight checkered with shadows,
You gleamed with a lustre surpassingly fair.
You rose and fell with the swell of her breathing,
While thy gay companion was lost in her hair.

Sweet is thy fragrance, charming thy perfume
That rises from her gentle bosom too.
Now 'tis a question, I know not whether
You perfumed her bosom, or it perfumed you!

SING TO ME.

COME sing to me tonight my dear,
While the clouds are dropping rain.
I'm sad and lone, and fain would hear
Thy sweet voice once again,
In days of yore it gently bore
Me on the wings of love,
And every strain and sweet refrain
Seemed whispered from above.

Fair angel of my dreams art thou
And guardian of my sleep.
Though distance separate us now
One pledge for thee I keep:
Though winds may blow the rain and snow
And the night be dark and chill,
I'd never mind the cruel wind,
If thou wert with me still.

REVERIE.

I.

SOMETIMES, dear heart, I see a gleam
Of some far-off thing in the blue;
And as I sit alone and dream
I wonder if you're looking too.
Because I think you are, my dear,
The glow sinks deep into my heart,
And places distant seem as near,—
Then let the vision not depart.

II.

Up to the star my message springs,
And from the star again to you.
Out of the Silence something sings,
And this its burden, "She is true!"
Then let me sit and dream away
The quiet summer evening long,
And wake to know at break of day,
That you, dear heart, inspired the song.

ENIGMA.

MY thought, my pen, I can't control,
For they have long since mastered me.
Even now they hold my soul
In bondage.—Sweet captivity!

I battled long with secret powers;
Contested blindly, fear unknown.
I breathed the fragrance of the flowers
Sometimes, by love, to victors thrown.

I battle yet; but I am slain
By far more often than I slay.
Beside me are my foemen lain
And yet am I less strong than they!

SPEAK TO ME LOVE.

SPEAK to me, Love, as the morn's first ray
Clothes the East in a mantle of gold.
Ere the first wild throat hath sung in the day,
Or his paeon of love hath told.

Speak, when the loitering noontide steals
O'er the land like a breath from the sea.
For I sometimes think thy heart conceals
What ought to be told to me.

Speak when the lingering twilight dies,
And the shadows are hazy and long;
When the notes of the lute in ecstasy rise,
And the evening is filled with song.

Speak to me, Love, at the midnight hour,
When the owlets are screaming on high;
And the moon-beams peep through your latticed bower,
With the stars keeping watch in the sky.

Speak to me, then, the magical word,
Like a treasure that word shall I seek,
For the angels in heaven alone have heard
What is sweeter, then Love, O speak!

TO A HARP.

THY strings by a woman's hands were tuned
To vibrate for her pleasure.
The evenings long were filled with song,
And her joy was beyond measure.

What a world of melody there falls
From wires so small and slender!
To twilight skies thy murmurs rise
And echo back in accents tender.

Sometimes I hear a plaintive note
Akin to grief and sorrow,
E'en from that strain of sorest pain
A bit of joy I borrow.

A woman tuned my harp of heart
To vibrate for her pleasure;
Our evenings still the old thoughts fill
With tune and discord—equal measure.

A MEMORY.

I.

① FT I turn the sacred pages
Of a volume that is mine,
And my eyes in rapture linger
On a picture most divine.
When around the old, white school house,
At the games we loved so well,
Played the gay and happy children,
Before the teacher rang the bell.

II.

Favorites had each lad and lassie
In those days of tender youth;
And the hours were full of sunshine,
Full of love and child-like truth.
There was gladness on the playground,
Laughter sounded in the dell;
But our noisy shouts grew silent
When the teacher rang the bell.

III.

All the day the kind reproving
 Made obedience the rule,
For the children loved the master,
 And the master loved the school.
His smile was like the sunshine,
 And made the wee heart swell
With a real sense of pleasure,
 When the teacher rang the bell.

IV.

But there came a time of shadows,
 When my little sweetheart died;
For in childhood we had frolicked,
 And together laughed or cried.
Now the day was sad and lonely,
 And the clapper seemed to tell
Far and wide the sad, sad story,
 When the teacher rang the bell.

V.

Since years have passed and I have seen
 Again the same old places,
There is a void I'd like to fill,—
 Those happy smiling faces!
Yet of all the thoughts of youth and age,
 My memory loves to dwell
On the glad, sad time of childhood,
 When the teacher rang the bell.

VI.

Thus on the great school-yard of life,
 Assembled for a day,
Men frolic like we children did,
 And oft fall out at play;
But we shall pass with smiles and tears,
 When sounds the mournful knell,
As from the old school playground,
 When the teacher rang the bell.

ROSALIE.

A SLEEP in the arms of the calm summer night,
Lies dreaming my beauty ,the fair Rosalie!
Through clefts in the clouds falls the tremulous
light,
And leaps into splendor in dew-drop and tree.

One time in childhood when tired out with play,
I found her asleep with hair flecked with dew.
I stealthily stole to the tuft where she lay,
Half-fearfully whispered, "I love but you."

O hasten to waken, my beautiful rose!
For morning and meadow and mountain and stream,
Each musical throat the wild-wood knows,
Bid you awaken and tell me your dream!

ONE NIGHT.

WAS ever a rosebud half so fair
As the one my Laura wore in her hair?
It glowed in her locks of midnight jet,
And shined as a diamond, ebony set,
As she moved about in the dazzling light,
Where music was filling the air,—one night.

Was ever a face so glad and gay?
It bloomed as the lilac bushes in May.
Her cheeks wore the blush of a new-born rose,
Fair as an unopened bud was her nose.
Her dark heavy eyebrows softened the light
That danced from her beautiful eyes; one night?

A loveliness dwelt on her happy brow,
A phantom-like loveliness, I see it now
Float through the shadows, uncertain and gray,
Emerging like Phoebus at break of day.
Was ever a countenance half so bright
As my beautiful Laura's was one night?

* * * * *

No more shall I sing of her blushes fair,
And the midnight hue of her wavy hair.
Her brow is not lovely; her ill-shaped nose
Does not and cannot resemble the rose,
For there in the glare of the dazzling light
She loved and accepted my rival,—one night!

I KNEW NOT HER NAME.

I HAD not met her nor known her name,
For late she had come to town;
But the old, old story is just the same,
Whether beggar or prince of high renown.
We affect no heed to a careless glance,
Whether masculine smile or feminine frown;
But life's heart throbs at a countenance
Reflecting the light of your own true flame.

There she sat in the window seat,
With her pretty round chin in her hand.
She knew not I saw her, unconsciously sweet,
Therefore beautiful, you understand.
The tint of the cloud and the blue of the sky,
Blent till they seemed the same,
Colored her cheek and lighted her eye;
But I knew not her name.

.

What difference? I asked. My heart would sing:
 "Love is eternal and needs no return!"
God has breathed beauty into everything,
 The more our souls see it, the more for it yearn.
My heart went out to the maiden up there,
 But never her heart could I claim.
I did not tell her, although she was fair,
 For I knew not her name.

I look on the mountain, the lake and the shore,
 And the sun as he sleeps in the sea.
And I love them all. Could I love them more,
 If I knew that they loved me?
There as she sat in the last glow of day,
 Unconscious of my praise or blame,
In the large light of love, what difference I say,
 That I knew not her name?

A FADED VIOLET.

WHAT have we here? A faded violet
Confined between these pages long ago. —
For this intrusion, beg your pardon, yet
You have a secret I would like to know.

Perchance when first you peeped above the sod,
And caught the color from the azure sky,
You bowed your head in reverence to God,
And did not dream that you were born to die.

And then some love-lorn maiden saw you there,
A boon companion for her solitude.
And twined you in the ringlets of her hair, —
And did you share her melancholy mood?

Before Love's sacrifice upon the ground,
She knelt a reverential worshipper;
The shrine she long had sought was surely found,—
How sweet it was of you to die for her!

To die? Ah no! it is not yours to die;
For when you breathed your fragrance on the air,
'Twas borne to heaven on a maiden's sigh,
And blooms into eternal sweetness there.

So may my life grow sweeter after death,
With all its ills forgotten. May the good
Still be transmitted, like the violet's breath,
Till Change shall bring us into brotherhood.

SMILE.

WHEN the deepening shadows steal
O'er the soul and make it feel
A poor and weakened victim of its guile,
In this blackness worse than night,
Heaven sends a little light
With a smile.

If the sunshine peeping through
Silver clouds fall not on you
To cheer you with its radiance awhile,
Ere the fleeting vision dies,
Draw the sunshine from the skies
With a smile.

Every flower blooms to bless,
To shed its rays of happiness
Where anxious cares and longings would defile;
Every discord is a tune,
Night, the other end of noon,
If we smile!

IN TUNE.

HOW mournfully the bells are pealing
In tones of sadness over hill and shore!
The music like a shadow stealing,
Falls on my heart, and falling, sounds no
more.

O how the autumn winds are sighing!
They weep the sad declining of the year.
The leaves, like youthful hopes, are flying,
In minor keys are all the songs I hear.

The wind as it moans on the mountain,
The lonesome splash of the dark warterfall,
The peal of the bells, the drip of the fountain,—
My heart, my heart, is in tune with it all!

"NOW I LAY ME,"

"**N**OW I lay me down to sleep"
I overheard her saying.
She, kneeling there in the moonlight glare
By her bed, was softly praying.

If such a little child as this
Needs prayer in life's beginning,
If yet I may, how shall I pray,
Who am so old in sinning?

So then may I though poor and vile
From love and mercy straying,
His guidance seek in manner meek,
Like the little child a-praying.

DECLINING YEAR.

DECLINING year, what hast thou left for me?
What promises have been fulfilled in thee?
What cherished hopes, what long suspended joys,
What childish fancies, like to children's toys,
Long wished for, but when won their glory dies,
And one day only, lasts the glad surprise?
Yet in the splendor of thy closing days,
Let all the earth break forth in greatful praise,
Not for what thou seemest, but what thou art;
For man, not thou, has left undone his part.

TWO MYSTERIES.

WHAT beauty in a poplar leaf
When kissed by Autumn's breath!
In colors bold, of red and gold,
It clothes itself for death.

Each pretty leaf I gaze upon,
By breezes tossed and twirled,
So much conceals, but yet reveals
A universe and a world!

If thus dame Nature fondly keeps
Her secrets hid and whole,
With eyes set low, how shall we know
The beauties in the soul?

THE TEMPEST.

I HEARD the tempest rumbling on the deep,
And saw the billows dashed upon the shore,
And thunder-heads that leaped from steep to
steep,

Amid the clamor and the awful roar
Of Nature's gunning. How the lightning flashed
And played among the clouds at eventide!
And Heaven's giants with their broad-swords clashed,
Until the mountains, stern as Atlas, sighed.

The winds grew still, the thunder ceased to roll,
And quiet fell as softly as the night.
The waters murmured on the pebbly shoal,
As fast the billows vanished out of sight.
Out came the moon and gazed the landscape o'er,
As in mid-air she reared her splendid form,
More charming night was never seen before,—
The calm of calms, to drive away a storm!

But fiercer yet, the storm that o'er my soul
Swept with its harrowing gusts and fitful sighs.
My heart heard groans of dissapointment roll
And echo back the sadness from the skies.
But then Love's sunshine lent a little ray
Of beauty, but of tenderness the more.
My soul has known no sweeter, clearer day
Than that which heard the tempest cease to roar.

THE SLEEPING GUARDS.

YE keepers of the gates, ye sentinels,
That guard the city from a thousand ills,
Awake, awake, and hear my warning cry!
Within thy walls thy fiercest foeman dwells.

Within the city, lapped in slumber deep,
They trust the nightly vigils that you keep,
Yea, put their very lives into your trust,—
I find you here, ye faithless, fast asleep!

And now the clouds, instead of starlit skies,
Hang over you, and still your leaden eyes
See not the fury of the approaching storm,
Nor heed the mixing of its murky dyes!

Nearer still the ravenous billows roll,
And leap, like frightened steeds beyond control;
They surge and leap and in their maddened charge,
Dash to pieces on the rocky shoal.

To all the threatening signs ye pay no heed,
Nor do you rise to meet the storm; indeed,
More motionless and dead than e'er before.—
O that men could a word of warning read!

* * * * *

And thus it was, the keeper and the kept,
With careless unconcern so soundly slept,
That, silent as the falling of the night,
The evil that they feared upon them crept.

CONTRITION—A PRAYER.

① LORD, my poor petition hear,
For thine extended grace;
And from the trembling child of fear,
Hide not a smiling face.

Too long mine eyes have sought the ground,
Now to be turned to thee;
But thou hast said where sins abound,
Thy grace shall be more free.

Too long my wayward feet have trod
Along forbidden ways.
O guide them in the paths of God,
And teach my lips his praise.

O vile and sinful that I am!
So high and holy thou,
I need the faith of Abraham,
To slay my Isaac now.

Lord, I believe that thou art just
And merciful to man;
Then take the remnant of my dust,
And mold it to thy plan.

Then all my selfishness and pride
Consumed by love shall be;
And I shall enter glorified,
Into the courts with thee.

THE GUIDING STAR.

I SUBMIT me to my fate
And as thy will is, so be mine;
For future years shall compensate
The petty hopes I now resign.

Nor pining, shall I still pursue
The rugged way that leads me on
To hardship sore and conflict new,
Since none will miss me when I'm gone.

My tears would start,—but what are they
If no glad triumph come thereby?
How great the darkness if the day
Drive not the night-fiends from the sky!

A lonely star obscured by tears,
Shines dimly in a distant sky.
It glowed along my path in years,
When to advance seemed but to die.

Then ever on, O faltering feet!
Retreat disdain, straight paths resume.
In realms of light thine eyes shall meet
The star that led thee through the gloom.

DAWN.

THE dawn, the glorious dawn!
Spreads its splendor o'er field and lawn.
Adown the glades in semi-shades,
The dew-dipped grass, like sabre blades,
Stands in bright array.
Waken then, ye drowsy sleeper,
Of the ozone drink the deeper,
See the world on dress parade,
For dawn's the best that God has made!
Emblem of my wild ambition,
Haste, O, haste its glad fruition,
And in upright bold position,
Let me face each dawning day.
Glad because the sun is shining,
Not despairing, not repining,
And a loving ear inclining
For the voice that always sings.
At dawn divinely near it,
A single note heard would endear it,
An anthem—only hear it,—
Issues from the meanest things.

UNSELFISHNESS.

WHY need I pine for days that are no more
And writhe, forlorn, in sore despondency,
When all about me silent voices call,
And airy fingers beckon me to rise
To heights above the grisly multitude?
For like unrestling waves by ocean tossed,
Jostles the noisy crowd in malcontent.
In blindness, rage and seething misery,
The peoples fling themselves, and then decay
Like flowers before a parching, desert wind.
I hear the groans, the unconscious grief,
Of humanity degenerate and vile.
I see her stricken by the pangs of pain,
A social unrest never cured by prayer
Alone, nor charmed to quiet by the arts
Of Augury or Magic. When I wake,
And hear the living groans of men that die
The ignoble death of slaves; and are forgot
Before the clouds have ceased to sound their knell,
—The only knell for such as die like this,—
I long to rise above the pain-sick throng
Only to lift my fellows from the dust!

THE MIDNIGHT SONG.

IT was midnight. A vagrant strain of song
Came trilling through the stillness dark and deep,
And lingered on in rapturing cadence long.

I can't repeat it now, for half-asleep,
I lay there dreaming the dull night away.
It sounded weird and tremulous like notes
Of birds that cannot wait until the day
To sing their hearts out through their little throats.
So on my spirit falls a voice sometimes,
That seems an echo from a distant shore.
I listen to the music of its rhymes,
To hear it all, lest it shall sound no more;
But when I try to write what I have heard,
I find the spirit there, but not the word.

JOHN HAY.

BEHOLD him who was great and is no more!
The man of peace has laid his treaties by,
And turned his eyes toward the peaceful shore,
To enter the republic of the sky.

Patient, serene, amid the storms of fate,
Our pilot stood nor feared the threatening blast.
His right hand ruled the rigid helm of state,
His left upheld her standard, firm and fast.

His eye was ever set beyond the gloom,
Where mists had melted into perfect day.
No narrow aim nor selfish act found room
In that clear eye, where duty showed the way.

No more forever shall he hear the roar
Of angry guns, nor see the battle throng.
No more for him the bird of war will soar;
No more the bugle-call, the victor's song.

No more on troubled sea his bark is seen;
No more at sight of him the lands rejoice;
No more the weak on him for succor lean;
No more they throng to hear his god-like voice!

The breathing night-winds bear him on their breath;
The rain-clouds cast a pall on every hill;
The babbling brooks now softly murmurs "Death,"
All that has voice mourns him whose voice is still.

He too, knew how to strike the tuneful lyre,
And bid the hostile lands from conflict cease.
The message lit the earth like holy fire
That blazes from the altar-stones of peace.

A leader thou, whose eye was ever bright,
A hand reached through the ages guiding thine;
And through the gloom of each succeeding night,
It held a torch whose lustre was divine.

But why recite our woe since thou art gone
To peace infinite, Heaven's own reward?
But rather pray that He who led thee on,
Shall lead us up to thee and to thy Lord.

ENDURE IT ALL.

① WILT thou leave me all alone
In a night so dark and cold?
The wild winds rage and crash and moan,
The tree-tops sway and creak and groan,
And I am out of the fold!

Pray lead me to yon kindly light
That gleams from a far-off tower.
My eyes are dim with tears tonight,
Queer phantoms lure and sounds affright,
And the murky storm-clouds lower.

I wept and wailed my sad heart sore,
Nor came there a helping hand.
So I bade my spirit weep no more;
But wait till the storm and night be o'er,
And sunshine kiss the land.

Then came a sweet voice to my ear,
Like a mellow bugle-call:
"It does not calm the night,—this fear—
Nor check a single burning tear,
So be thyself; endure it all!"

**BRUSH THE COBWEBS FROM THE
PORTRAITS.**

BRUSH the cobwebs from the portrait;
Draw the sombre veil aside!
Shall the dead go unremembered,
Shall the dust their faces hide?

Ah, that's better. How the life-glow
Flushed his cheek and lit his eye!
Men are born to be immortal,
Not to breathe and toil and die.

Here a line of gloom and sadness
Marks his brow where it doth run.
There a line of noble triumph,—
Lo they meet and blend as one?

Tell me, Sage of time forgotten,
Is each joy so joined with strife?
Does each triumph bring its failure,
And is Death so joined with Life?

As a gleam falls on the portrait
From the crimson, twilight shore,
Faint and sweet the answer cometh:
"Hear ye this and ask no more.

"Death is for the dead and dying,
Life for him who hath it still!
Death is but the end of service,
Life, a working of the Will."

Then brush the cobwebs from the portraits;
Draw their sombre veils aside.
Let the dead be aye remembered,
For they in life with thee abide!

A PALACE.

I SING of a ruined palace,
Of a broken and crumbling wall;
The wild ivy grows on the old porticoes,
Over battlement, turret and all.

Such glittering, flashing splendor
As these corridors used to know!
When the court music played and the gay dancers swayed
In the days of the sweet long ago.

But time has crumbled the portals
And wasted the columns of stone;
There's no whirling quadrille, and the music is still,
And the ruin stands haunted and lone.

Yet will I sing of a palace—
A palace of perishing art,—
Where the light fades away and the black shadows stay
Like a vision of death, on my heart.

Splendor is short-lived and fleeting,
And glory, a word for decay.
Of the palace ideal, the thing that is real
Is but a wretched cabin of clay!

IGNIS FATUUS.

AT early morn I gazed into the East,
And bade my soul on Nature's beauties feast;
But as I watched the snow-white mist-banks rise,
They vanished into commonplacest skies.

I heard a song ring out at break of day,
It seemed as if 'twould bear my soul away;
But when I paused to admire the beauteous strain,
It ceased, and nevermore was heard again.

I fixed my gaze upon a lovely star,
More beautiful than those about it,—far;
But while mine eyes drank in its gorgeous light,
It glowed an instant, then was lost from sight.

Through many a weary year in varied light,
I sought my dearest idol, day and night;
But when my raptured eyes its form had seen,
The fleeting phantom cried, "Unclean, Unclean!"

THE LIFE OF ART.

TO be one of the immortal few
Who sing their songs from the heart!
And live in the realm of the good and true,
Where love is the life of art!

If Labor and Love should ever wed
And cherish the offspring, Worth,
The music of Eden,—long time dead,—
Would rise and swell through the earth.

A false chord was struck when chivalry drove
The peasant away from his king,
And made degradation the price of his love,
—A song he could never sing.

The clank of chains in the darkened cell;
The moans of the maimed and halt;
And the sad heart-pains, like wails from hell—,
O, where is there aught to exalt?

A million stars hath the skyless night
Shining beyond the leaden vault.
Our sorrows and woes, O love makes them light!
And there is much to exalt.

Peasant and king shall be one at length
When time wrecks a few systems more;
And man shall measure his zeal by his strength,
And all shall be well, as before.

Then all shall be part of the erstwhile few
Whose musical lyre is the heart,
To live in the realm of the good and true,
When Love is the life of art.

A SAD OLD MAN.

I SEE him daily as I pass
A-sitting in the sun,
An old, old man with head bowed low,
Whose sands are almost run.

No tender hand to sooth his pain,
No love to calm distress,
Alone and sad, he lives beyond
His days of usefulness.

His life was never one to make
The thoughts of age sublime;
And now there's nothing he can do,
But to abide his time.

His friends? They vanished with his wealth,
For they his wealth pursued.
His children likewise left him then
With base ingratitude.

There is no poets' legacy,
No holy heritage
For meditation, to inspire
And sweeten his old age.

His past is like the ocean wild,
O'erswept by stormy gales,
On which his poor life, rudderless,
Embarked with useless sails.

And now he's drifting into port,
As aimless as he sailed.
There are no beacons on the shore,
For all his lights have failed.

There are no tender memories
To gild his path with light.
He's in the twilight of his days,
And soon will come the night.

O night of nights how dark 'twill be,
His cheerless way to grope!
With no hand guiding through the gloom,
No light, no love, no hope!

I sometimes think I'd rather die
Before I reach the prime,
And leave ideals unattained,
Than live beyond my time.

TO THE LAST MOSQUITO.

THOU wast not welcome once when thou didst
bring
A noisy host to revel on my brow;
But since they long ago have ceased to sing,
I welcome thee with thy weird hummings now.

The frosty nights have softened that shrill voice
That sang so gleefully a month ago.
There's time to grieve, and season to rejoice,
And now is time for bitterness and woe.

Didst thou return to say a last farewell
To all the loved of those warm summer nights?
And to repent perhaps, ah, who can tell?
Welcome, thou shalt flit unharmed about my lights.

THE SEAMSTRESS AND THE DREAMER.

(ALLITERATIVE.)

A SEAMSTRESS seamed a seemly seam,
A silken seam seamed she.
A drowsy dreamer dreamed a dream,
Delightful dream dreamed he.

A silken seam, a drowsy dream,
Some soft and silent sighs;
Love-light's glisten, glow and gleam,
Leaped from their love-lit eyes.

Then a seam, a sad, sad seam,
As many a maid hath found,
A seemly seamstress to a dream
With iron threads hath bound.

So now the dreamer dreameth dreams,
Of his seamstress dreameth he,
And still the seamstress seameth seams,
For the food-bill payeth she!!

L OF C.

SONNETS.



TO——

I FEED my hungry soul on thoughts of thee,
And on the perfume of a lovely rose.
I ope the petals of the flower to see
The fount from which the rising fragrance flows.
I read a story written in the bloom,
An ancient story told of youth and love,
That charms the soul alike in light and gloom,
And lifts it toward the greater Soul above.
This, said I, is indeed the fountain-head
Of all the loveliness the rose doth show;
And every perfume by the zephyrs spread,
Is but the breath of God; then let it grow!
Sometime I hope to find the counterpart
Of this rose-fountain in thy secret heart.

THE PYRAMID INDESTRUCTIBLE.

① LD Egypt's pyramids have reared their forms
For countless ages o'er the barren sands.

Amid the ravages of time and storms
Of centuries, has stood the work of hands,
Long folded in the deep and silent sleep,—
The last reward that comes alike to all.
Although for aeons yet, the winds may sweep
In vain, their hoary summits, they must fall.
But character, the monumental pile
Raised in adversity and daily strife,
Stands high in majesty above the Nile
That feeds its builders and renews their life;
And when the Pyramids shall cease to be,
'Twill heavenward point throughout eternity.

RETURN.

MY native hills, how I have longed for thee,
As in strange lands, a stranger, I sojourned!
How often for the stillness have I yearned,
While roaming streets in cities dead to me,
And seeing naught where there was much to see!
A spirit told me when my home-love burned,
“When to thine own dear hills thy face hath turned,
All thou hast lost shall then return to thee.”
But on the journey that my life must go
Not erring feet alone that lose the way,
For inward impulse purges or defiles,
And sets its mark for earthly joy or woe.
’Tis neither cloud nor sun that makes the day,
But in thy thinking, Nature frowns or smiles.

AM I A PART?

AM I indeed a part of all I've met?
So little of heaven, so much of earth below?
And is the world so heartless to bestow
Upon a single soul the fond regret
For all its evils? Tell me, is there yet
No balm in Gilead for grief to know?
Shall anguish roll his Juggernaut of woe
Over my very heart, nor I forget?
Ah, look again! thou hast not seen aright.
The world is not a harbor for distress,
And life is more than wretchedness and blight;
And from the gloom of each succeeding night,
Into a vernal realm of happiness,
Breaks morning forth with an eternal light.

A WHISPER THROUGH THE GLOOM.

THE storm-clouds scud across the darkened sky,
The gloom hangs heavy over hill and vale;
And distant thunder, like the muffled wail
Of stricken hosts re-echos its own sigh,
As flash on flash the snake-tongued arrows fly,
And fall like fitful gusts of fiery hail;
While wind and darkness on the earth prevail,—
Her music hushed, her only note a cry!
So with my soul. The light I used to know
Has vanished from the earth and all is dark.
And yet, I trust, behind the clouds a glow
Is still alive to guide my stranded bark
O'er ways unknown till all my wanderings cease,
And from the gloom an echo whispers "Peace."

HOME.

FAR, far beyond that mountain's hazy dome,
In vale sequestered stands a palace cot;
A palace, though crowned heads it shelters not,
A haven for my wayward heart—it's Home!
Ah! speak that word with reverence! Though I roam
The ends of earth, whatever be my lot,
I know full well that I am not forgot,
And longing guards the portals 'till I come.
There is a port beyond the distant sky,
Whose beacons guide me o'er the angry foam
And when my ships at heaven's anchor lie
Methinks 'twill be so much like going home;
That visions of the two before me rise,
And oft I wonder which is Paradise.

ASPIRATION.

I LONG to climb the heights not reached before,
And, Moses-like, from multitudes depart,
Where naught disturbs the quiet of the heart
But wholesome longing still to rise and soar,
And from the summit gaze the landscape o'er,
With all its heartless traffic, exchange, mart,
The life of gold, the death of love in art;
And there perchance commune with bards of yore!
Selfishness! Ah, No! Yet would I climb
And carve with burning characters in stone
The words of life. Then all who toil should see
The flaming standard and the goal sublime,
And hear the voice that speaks in tend'rest tone:
"Arise, arise, the heights have need of thee!"

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